

The Time is Now: Legislation for the Interagency

**A Monograph
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Abstract

The Time is Now: Legislation for the Interagency by Major Lanny A. Hogaboom II, United States Army, 43 pages.

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have resulted in an unparalleled level of cooperation between government agencies in spite of the fact that no codified congressional legislation has directed cooperation. Due to historical precedent and competing demands of governmental agencies, the U.S. government must organize itself to conduct campaigns effectively. The Department of Defense has taken the lead in a majority of recent conflicts, owed primarily to its disproportionate size and funding. However, the core competencies of other federal agencies have not been fully realized and not brought to bear. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have proven not only the lethality of our armed forces, but also demonstrated its ability to fight as a seamless, joint force. This has not always been the case. Pacification operations in Vietnam, the failed American hostage rescue attempt in Iran and the difficult civil-military integration of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Operation Iraqi Freedom highlight the challenges and inherent need for the U.S. government to implement legislation focused on a transparent interagency process. Every federal agency has its own unique organizational structure and no one agency is tasked to integrate the activities of the other. Each of these agencies defines their roles and responsibilities differently from the other, and while cooperation exists, there are seams and gaps owing to the lack of strategic direction and guidance from the administration and Congress. Legislation in three strategic focus areas must be addressed in order to challenge agency supremacy and instill the joint cooperation necessary to solve complex challenges in the future. First, the interagency lacks a doctrine or concept of operations that has proven its utility in joint military operations and is absent a higher authority responsible for the development and training of personnel. Second, agencies use regional structures to organize their policies and operations in an inconsistent manner with their counterparts. Finally, personnel policies are focused towards the development of their own agencies rather than the interagency community as a whole. In an increasingly complex security environment, greater unity of effort across cabinet agencies must be achieved. Legislation similar to that, which forced the military to integrate, would ensure interagency cooperation and efficiency and success in planning and executing the U.S. national security strategy.

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Introduction

Operation Uphold Democracy, the U.S. intervention in the Caribbean nation of Haiti began 19 September 1994. The operation was initiated in response to the overthrow of the President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide by General Raoul Cedras and the subsequent repression and mass migration of the Haitian people to the United States that followed. The crisis began when Haitian rebels blocked the docking of the USS Harlan County and the U.S. military advisors on board who were sent to assist and professionalize the Haitian military on 11 October 1993. This act, along with the murder of the Haitian Minister of Justice signaled to President Bill Clinton that diplomatic efforts failed, prompting national security planners to prepare for military and peacekeeping operations.¹ The National Security Council and the Department of Defense focused on a civil-military solution to the Haitian dilemma; however friction between the two developed instantly. A civil-military dress rehearsal conducted on 11 September 1994 highlighted the challenges of the interagency response. The Department of State along with other U.S. government agencies did not have the manpower, resources, or training to be effective in the early days of the operation. The State Department, United States Agency for International Development and non-governmental agencies were simply not able to respond in time and with the capacity to assist the Haitian people in a hostile environment. Due to the lack of preparedness by the State Department, President Clinton directed the Defense Department to work with the United Nations and the Aristide camp until security was established and civilian agencies could assume responsibility for relief on the ground.² On 19 September, elements of the 18th Airborne Corps and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit arrived in Haiti and began humanitarian and relief operations. Immediately, the U.S. military recognized the need for civilian experts in economic,

¹ Ronald H. Cole, "Grenada, Panama, and Haiti: Joint Operational Reform," *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Autumn/Winter 1998-1999): 62.

² John R. Ballard, *Upholding Democracy: The United States Military Campaign in Haiti, 1994-1997* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 67.

reconstruction and relief operations and sought assistance from the interagency and United Nations, however, neither the Aristide government nor the interagency or United Nations could be hurried. Civilian aid organizations and U.S. agencies could not support the increasing demands for food and medical relief, local policing functions broke down and rebuilding efforts from the chaos were almost non-existent. The military bore the brunt of the relief efforts in spite of the recognized interagency demands before the operation. Operation Uphold Democracy was ultimately a success in military terms, however, the military could not compensate for the lack of support and experience from non-Defense agencies and organizations.³

The security challenges facing the nation today are increasingly complex and not unlike the state of affairs in Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy. The prospect of the United States taking unilateral military action in the future however is becoming increasingly unlikely and operations over the last fifteen years confirm this. During the Kurdish crisis in 1991 in northern Iraq, twenty-eight non-governmental organizations, including Doctors without Borders, Save the Children and U.S. Agency for International Development were involved in providing humanitarian assistance.⁴ That number grew to seventy-eight non-governmental organizations during the U.S. involvement in Somalia in 1993 and 170 non-governmental organizations in Haiti in 1994. These efforts, while individually important, were absent a higher authority and resulted in an uncoordinated approach to support the people they were sent to help.⁵

The Defense Department has historically taken the lead in a majority of these recent conflicts, owed primarily to its disproportionate size and funding, however the core competencies of other federal agencies have not been fully realized and not brought to bear in a unified

³ Clinton S. Bolton, Jr., *Military Operations Other Than War: The Civil Military Operations Center in Operation Support [i.e., Uphold] Democracy* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 1997), 1.

⁴ Lisa Witzig Davidson, Margaret Daly Hayes, and James J. Landon *Humanitarian and Peace Operations: NGOs and the Military in the Interagency Process* (Washington, D.C.: NDU, 1996), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

approach.⁶ The foreign policy of the United States has increasingly become militarized as evidenced in the efforts of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq, however, if recent conflicts are an indicator, future foreign involvement by the United States will not be successfully prosecuted solely on military terms.⁷ John E. Herbst, the coordinator for the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization articulated this challenge, saying, “Weak and failed states pose a serious security challenge for the United States and the international community. They can become breeding grounds for terrorism, weapons proliferation, trafficking in humans and narcotics, organized crime, and humanitarian catastrophes. The pace of American military interventions has risen to about one every two years. If the U.S. government is going to meet these threats, we must adapt our national security architecture.”⁸ The threats and challenges this nation faces in the next decade are likely to be just as ambiguous and challenging to the wars recently fought. Assuming these interventions will continue, should cooperation between military and civilian organizations be directed through legislation?

Past military operations in Vietnam, Iran, and Iraq as well as the visible success of Goldwater-Nichols are a useful medium to evaluate the interagency challenges and offer a guide to successful implementation of a legislative act. This monograph examines several examples of interagency cooperation since the establishment of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and develops the argument as to why the Congress should enact legislation directing interagency partnership. These examples include the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Program employed

⁶ Clark A. Murdock and Michelle A. Flournoy et al, *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: U.S. Government and Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era*, Phase 2 Report (Washington D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005), 6.

⁷ Sunil B. Desai, “Solving the Interagency Puzzle”, *Policy Review No. 129*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, [1 February 2005]: 57.

⁸ Headquarters, United States Army, *Field Manual 3-07: Stability Operations* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 2008), App. B, IMS.

during the Vietnam War,⁹ the failed Operation Eagle Claw effort during the Iranian hostage rescue attempt,¹⁰ and the Coalition Provisional Authority during the early stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom.¹¹ This monograph will conclude with doctrinal, regional structure and personnel policy recommendations that need to be legislatively enacted in order to achieve the synergies necessary for the U.S. to be successful in future conflict in an uncertain global environment. The challenging conditions that define the lack of interagency today bear a striking similarity to those the military experienced prior to and following Goldwater-Nichols and are the considerations worth taking into account for the uncertain future.

Interagency operations are no longer rare and are expected to be the norm in a complex and rapidly changing worldwide security environment. Every federal agency has its own unique organizational structure and no one agency is tasked to integrate the activities of the other. Each of these agencies defines their roles and responsibilities differently from the other, and while cooperation exists, there are seams and gaps owing to the lack of strategic direction and guidance from the administration and Congress. Responding to these future complex challenges requires a multiagency, interdisciplinary approach that brings to bear the many diverse skills and resources of the Federal government and other public and private organizations.¹² The National Security Act of 1947 is no longer capable of efficient or effective campaign success due to the current non-existent interagency doctrine, a fractured organizational structure, and unsound personnel

⁹ Graham A. Cosmos, *The United States Army in Vietnam, MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation 1962-1967* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2006), 357.

¹⁰ Warren Christopher, *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of Crisis* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), 2.

¹¹ Dr. Donald P. Wright and COL James R. Reese, *On Point II, Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom May 2003-January 2005*, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, CSI Press (Fort Leavenworth, KS, Combat Studies Institute, 2008). 151.

¹² United States Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-08: Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization, and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination During Joint Operations, Vol I*, (Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, 2006), I-1.

policies of governmental agencies.¹³ Legislation similar to that, which forced the military to integrate, would ensure interagency cooperation and efficiency and success in planning and executing the U.S. national security strategy. Therefore, the need for congressionally directed legislation mandating cooperation between agencies is paramount to the successful prosecution of current and future conflict.

¹³ The Act merged the Department's of War and Navy into the National Military Establishment, headed by the Secretary of Defense. The NME was renamed as the Department of Defense. The purpose was to unify the Army, Navy, and what was soon to become the Air Force into a federated structure. Aside from the military reorganization, the act established the National Security Council, a central place of coordination for national security policy in the executive branch, and the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S.'s first peacetime intelligence agency. The function of the council was to advise the president on domestic, foreign, and military policies so that they may cooperate more tightly and efficiently.

Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) in Vietnam

Prior to President John F. Kennedy taking office in 1961, a National Intelligence Estimate published in August 1959 suggested that there would be little threat in Vietnam for the foreseeable future. The estimate reported North Vietnam would continue to support the Viet Cong, but an “overt invasion seemed most unlikely.”¹⁴ The situation in Vietnam was deemed unhappy, but not yet unstable. Classified reports continued to show an increase in Viet Cong strength and activity in the Vietnamese countryside, which ultimately culminated with a failed military coup to overthrow Diem in November 1960. Despite the actual situation on the ground however, an optimistic view was always briefed to U.S. policymakers. President Kennedy realizing more action necessary sent a team of military and civilian officials to South Vietnam in order to develop a counterinsurgency plan in October 1961.¹⁵ General Maxwell Taylor, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, provided reasons on why the U.S. should stay out of Vietnam, but ultimately suggested an increase in the number of American advisors as well as several Army battalions of engineer, signal, and medical troops with enough combat troops to provide security. President Kennedy agreed and believed the increase in advisors would directly improve South Vietnamese military performance and provide a new source of intelligence.¹⁶ Despite President Kennedy’s desire, the army entered Vietnam with a conventional war doctrine that was more suited for conflict in Europe and the pacification programs yielded few results after three years of fighting.¹⁷

¹⁴ United States Department of Defense, *The Pentagon Papers: The Defense Department History of United States Decisionmaking on Vietnam*, The Senator Gravel ed. vol. II (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 18.

¹⁵ Ronald Spector, *After Tet, The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1993), 15.

¹⁶ James W. Dunn, “Province Advisers in Vietnam, 1962-1965,” in *Lessons from an Unconventional War*, ed. Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Schultz Jr. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 1-22.

Despite the influx of additional military and civilian advisors, progress in pacifying support for the North Vietnamese regime was stalled. The final approach in the form of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program is instructive in understanding the civil-military efforts in the Vietnam. America's initial involvement in the Vietnam War centered on an advisory effort to the South Vietnamese government intended to counter communist influence and provide security to the villages and hamlets in South Vietnam. There were numerous attempts at pacification in Vietnam prior to CORDs. These programs were initiated and carried out by both the South Vietnamese government and the United States. Although the programs differed in name, they each had two main goals: 1) protect the rural population from the Viet Cong and 2) meet the rural population's needs through various aid and infrastructure support programs. The goal was to generate support for the South Vietnam regime. The mechanism for extending pacification consisted of various small and diverse programs run by every civilian agency in South Vietnam, however, the effort made little progress. Those agencies involved in pacification had neither the resources nor the leverage to prompt action.¹⁸ More significant to their breakdown than the lack of unity and coordination of effort, none of the programs could provide consistent security for the population they were trying to support.¹⁹

¹⁷ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 4.

¹⁸ Dale Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1990), 47.

¹⁹ The major programs for pacification include: Agrovilles, the Strategic Hamlet program, Chieu Hoi or "Open Arms," Chien Thang or "Will to Victory," Hop Tac or "Victory" (this foreshadowed the U.S. military's later role in pacification support), U.S. Army civil affairs mobile training teams, medical civil affairs programs (MEDCAP), county fair operations, Long Huu operation, Operation FAIRFAX/Rang Dong, Operation CEDAR FALLS, Office of Civil Operations, Revolutionary Development Cadre, and the USMC Combined Action Platoon (CAP) program. According to Robert Komer, Civic Action, Agrovilles, the Strategic Hamlet program of 1961-63, the 1964-65 Hop Tac campaign around Saigon, and Revolutionary Development during 1965-67 were the most prominent. Robert Komer, "Was There Another Way?," in *The Lessons of Vietnam*, ed. W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, 1977), 213; R. W. Komer, "Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam" (Santa Monica: RAND, 1970), 1-2; Hunt, [*Pacification: The American Struggle for Vietnam's Hearts and Minds*], 16-30, 45-59.

In 1961, the advisory effort on consisted of several agencies, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Agency for International Development the U.S. Information Agency, and the Department of State. Each of these agencies developed and coordinated their efforts through the U.S. Embassy, however, the increase in American combat strength, made it difficult for the military and civilian agencies to cooperate due to the lack of a formal interagency coordination system. To further efforts in Vietnam, President Kennedy formed an ad hoc group of counterinsurgency experts to improve interagency coordination. Unfortunately, the group could not decide whether political or military measures deserved first priority: several argued that programs to win political loyalty had to come first because that was a requirement for establishing security while others argued it was unfeasible to win the loyalty of people who were being exploited by the Viet Cong. In addition, the departments of Defense and State were unwilling to give up any control over their respective programs in South Vietnam. These disagreements reflected uncertainty within the administration as to the nature of the threat to South Vietnam and the appropriate response.²⁰

General William B. Westmoreland, Commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam articulated the challenges the administration faced absent a codified interagency approach. Following a number of years of conventional fighting and disjointed advisory efforts, he wrote, “It is abundantly clear that all political, military, economic, and security (police) programs must be completely integrated in order to attain any kind of success in a country which has been greatly weakened by prolonged conflict. The Vietcong have learned this lesson well. Their integration of efforts surpasses ours by a large order of magnitude”.²¹ General Westmoreland also understood the challenges he faced with confronting an enemy force as well as a guerilla movement in South Vietnam, however, knew he lacked the forces to fight

²⁰ Richard A. Hunt, “Strategies at War: Pacification and Attrition in Vietnam,” in *Lessons from an Unconventional War: Reassessing U.S. Strategies for Future Conflicts*, ed. Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Shultz, Jr. (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982), 26.

²¹ General Westmoreland , to BG James Lawton Collins, Jr. Washington, 7 January 1966.

and pacify simultaneously, and choose the later in search and destroy missions as his main effort. In 1964 there were just over 23,000 troops, but by 1965 the failed advisory effort caused a six-fold increase to over 180,000 soldiers. This increase added further strain to an already fragile civil-military relationship and saw the advisory effort take a backseat to combat operations. Official visits by U.S. government personnel as well as congressional studies claimed there was limited progress being made with the advisory efforts and by the spring of 1966, President Johnson concluded that there was little indication of any real coordination between civilian agencies.²²

President Johnson, cognizant of the interagency friction, tasked interim National Security Advisor, Robert Komer, to unify the civilian and military pacification efforts in Vietnam. Komer set out by writing a paper entitled, “Giving a New Thrust to Pacification: Analysis, Concept, and Management,” which broke the problem of pacification down into three simultaneous lines of effort.²³ The three lines of effort focused on security, winning back popular support through anti-communist efforts, and large scale pacification programs. He believed that in order to maintain public support at home, a truly large-scale civil-military effort had to be undertaken. Westmoreland agreed, and despite objections from his own staff, told Komer, “I’m not asking for the responsibility, but I believe that my headquarters could take it in stride and perhaps carry out this important function more economically and efficiently than the present complex arrangement.”²⁴

²² Graham A. Cosmos, *The United States Army in Vietnam, MACV, The Joint Command in the Years of Escalation 1962-1967* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2006), 358.

²³ William Komer to John T. McNaughton, 7 August 1967, Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs.

²⁴ James Andrade and James H. Willbanks, *CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future* (Military Review, March-April 2006): 12.

Komer and Westmoreland had a unifying approach to the civil-military resistance problem and lobbied Secretary of Defense McNamara to give the mission to MACV.²⁵ McNamara concurred with both Westmoreland and Komer, and established the Office of Civil Operations, headed by Deputy Ambassador William Porter in November 1966. President Johnson gave Porter ninety to 120 days to improve pacification efforts or be absorbed by Westmoreland's command. This decision, with its short time constraint, was bankrupt from the beginning, because the civilian and military chains remained separated and Porter's agency did not have direct access to the vast material resources of Westmoreland's command. Shortly after the Office of Civil Operation's inception, Komer and Westmoreland agreed for the need for a single chain of command, telling President Johnson, "my problem is not with Westy, but the reluctant civilian side."²⁶

Interagency frictions were too numerous to overcome and caused Komer to disband the Office of Civil Operations in March of 1967. President Johnson then decided to implement Komer's original plan and decided to utilize Gen Westmoreland's command as the agency to lead the effort with National Security Memorandum 362, "Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification (Revolutionary Development), dated 9 May 1967."²⁷ This decision established the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support program and, for the first time civilians, reporting to a military chain of command. Westmoreland was at the top of the organization with Komer assuming the deputy position, equal to the Deputy MACV commander, General Creighton W. Abrams. The command relationship and organizational hierarchy initially created friction between Westmoreland and Komer, however, was quickly overcome due to Komer's strong personality and Westmoreland's newfound trust in his civilian subordinates. One study notes, "a

²⁵ Robert Komer, *The Other War in Vietnam: A Progress Report* (Department of State Bulletin, publication 8151, Far Eastern Series 151, October 1966), 18.

²⁶ James Andrade and James H. Willbanks, *CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future* (Military Review, March-April 2006): 13.

²⁷ National Security Memorandum 362, "Responsibility for U.S. Role in Pacification," (Revolutionary Development), 9 May 1967, 1.

combination of Westmoreland's flexibility and Komer's ability to capitalize on it through the absence of an intervening layer of command permitted Komer to run an unusual, innovative program within what otherwise might have been the overly strict confines of a military staff."²⁸ Added to this unique organization was William Colby. Komer brought Colby in to be his deputy director and in doing so brought Colby's extensive experience and service in the CIA into the mix.²⁹

With the leadership of the CORDS program defined, personnel immediately went to work throughout South Vietnam. At its peak, the CORDS program involved close to 8,500 American advisors, both civilian and military, working with countless allied nations and the South Vietnamese government.³⁰ The influx of additional military advisors to the CORDS program, coupled with an equal flood of supplies and managerial oversight created a marked increase in the successful pacification efforts in South Vietnam. In the four years between 1966 and 1970, financial aid rose by close to a billion dollars, the National Police increased their manpower 100% from 60,000 to 120,000 and South Vietnamese militia strength grew to 500,000 men. The North Vietnamese rightly saw this increase a considerable threat to its efforts in the south and caused the communists to shift their focus to countering the efforts of the CORDS program.³¹ The CORDS program had a positive effect on the lives of the South Vietnamese and by 1970; ninety-three percent of the population lived in largely secure villages free from Viet Cong influence.³²

²⁸ Thomas S. Scoville, *Reorganizing for Pacification Support* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1991), 78.

²⁹ William Colby, *Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen Year Involvement in Vietnam*, (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989), 232-233.

³⁰ Ronald Frankum and Stephan Maxner, *The Vietnam War for Dummies* (New York: Wiley Publishing, 2003), 250-251.

³¹ Thomas C. Thayer, *How to Analyze a War Without Fronts: Vietnam, 1965-72* (Washington D.C.: Defense Research Projects Agency, 1975), 788-89.

³² Hamlet Evaluation Survey (HES) Annual Statistics Analysis, 1968-71, Historian files, United States Army, Fort McNair, Washington D.C.: CMH, 1971, 3.

The final outcome in the Vietnam War notwithstanding, the overall effectiveness of the CORDS program and the interaction of military and civilian operators were significant. The security situation in South Vietnam improved, Saigon's influence in the hamlets and villages was pronounced, and the focus of the North Vietnam regime shifted to counter the increasing success of pacification. Hanoi's decision to rely primarily on conventional tactics to win the war is indicative of the success of the CORDS program. According to Deputy CORDS director Colby, speaking of the conventional attacks in 1972 and 1975, "the attacks... were pure North Vietnamese military attacks. There were no guerillas in those operations because in the interim our program [CORDS] actually won the guerilla war by winning the guerilla to the government."³³ Pacification in Vietnam made little progress until a unified structure that combined the conventional and military efforts was established. Once CORDS was made a part of the overall military effort, the ability to accomplish pacification missions became much easier.³⁴ Initially, the military regarded pacification as something only civilian agencies do, however, only the military has the personnel, material and money to get the job done and this fact was recognized by both military and civilian personnel. "These lessons might seem obvious and it is true that with hindsight, they might be easily identified; however, in practice, they are hard to execute."³⁵

The CORDS program was one of the success stories of the Vietnam War. Uniformed and civilian personnel who participated in the CORDS program considered it highly successful; however, most acknowledge that the effort came too late to affect the war's final outcome.³⁶ The points offered by those involved with the CORDS program confirm the lessons of interagency

³³ Ross Coffey, "Revisiting CORDS: The Need for Unity of Effort to Secure Victory in Iraq", *Military Review, Combined Arms Special Edition, Interagency Reader* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Command, U.S. Army, 2008), 15.

³⁴ Lewis Sorely, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Books, 1999), 74.

³⁵ Andrade, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," 11.

³⁶ Andrade, "CORDS/Phoenix: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Vietnam for the Future," 11.

cooperation, chief among them are unity of effort and organization. Its well designed and executed pacification efforts coupled with the successful civil-military integration offer an example of how the varying agencies of the U.S. government can successfully work together and the critical need for the right organizational structure to be in place for future operations. However, much like the lessons that the military had learned in Vietnam, the interagency lessons were not formalized through legislation. Following the end of the Vietnam War, the solutions developed in the CORDS program were largely forgotten and were only returned to following the efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Operation Eagle Claw: The Iranian Hostage Rescue

On 4 November 1979 at ten o'clock in the morning Iranian time, approximately 3,000 student demonstrators assembled in the streets outside the U.S. embassy in Tehran, stormed the walls and seized the complex. In the name of Ayatollah Khomeini, the students took sixty-six American diplomats and government employees' hostage. Iranian government officials assured their U.S. counterparts that they would do everything in their power to achieve a rapid release of the hostages, but it was Ayatollah Khomeini who would ultimately decide their fate. The stage was set for what would ultimately lead to a disastrous effort to rescue the hostages and the challenges policy makers faced not only in the Middle East, but also with its ability to conduct an operation in a joint manner. Operation Eagle Claw, the failed Iranian hostage rescue mission of the Carter Administration, highlights the lack of doctrine, cooperation and understanding inherent in joint and interagency operations.³⁷

The desire to become engaged in foreign affairs had waned in both public and private circles following American involvement in Vietnam. Iran was however an important ally in the region and any talk of withdrawing support for Iran made it vulnerable to communist influence.³⁸ Iran, with its location on the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea, its status as a land bridge between Asia and the Middle East and its vast oil reserves constituted a strategically important country for both the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Further, the successive administrations had supported the Shah since 1941 when U.S. forces were employed to maintain an approach to the Soviet Union known as the Persian Corridor. At the end of World War II, Allied forces withdrew from Iran, but American and British support remained to assist and

³⁷ Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, Kenneth J. Hagan, eds., *A History: American Foreign Relations Since 1895*, 6th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 409. Hereafter cited as Paterson et al, "A History: American Foreign Relations Since 1895".

³⁸ Warren Christopher, *American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of Crisis* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985), 2.

support the Shah. The withdrawal of Allied forces from Iran was to be completed by March of 1946; however the Soviet Union refused to relinquish control of the northern portion of Iran by playing on regional differences, forcing a reliance on Soviet protection in the area and encouraging socialism and Communism.³⁹ Iranian resentment of the United States and its policies has its origins in the early 1950s. The United States government supported any regime that was not communist, regardless of their popularity or human rights record following World War II and due to its strategic location and importance in the Middle East, Iran became an anti-communist country and the Shah began receiving further support.

In 1950 the Shah fled Iran when Mohammed Mossadegh, an Iranian politician who favored Iranian independence from foreign influence, was swept to power and became the prime minister in 1951. Mossadegh's fundamental and nationalistic ideology challenged the Shah's control of Iran, resulting in a number of policies inconsistent with Western interests. Mossadegh's anti-foreign policies and his nationalistic views triggered fear in the United States government. The Department of State felt that communists could exploit this chaos in the Middle East and cause countries, especially Iran, to turn against democracy and reform. The Shah, who had been in exile, sought support from the Truman administration, and the Central Intelligence Agency subsequently initiated Operation AJAX, the CIA plan to unseat Mossadegh and put the Shah back in power in Iran.⁴⁰

A relationship between governments developed that saw a dependence on Iranian oil balanced by the purchase by Iran of vast quantities of American military equipment following Operation AJAX. Over time however, Iran's close ties to the west became a source of unpopularity with the Iranian people, who opposed the Shah's growing internal repression and supported the Ayatollah's accusations that reliance on American support diminished Iran's

³⁹ Geoffrey Kemp, *Forever Enemies? American Policy & The Islamic Republic of Iran* (NW Washinton, DC: The Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, 1994), 19.

⁴⁰ Paterson et al, "A History: American Foreign Relations Since 1895," 409.

independence. The Shah was quickly losing power in his own country and the U.S. government debated how long it could support the Shah. In 1977, Jimmy Carter became President and inherited the complex, yet supportive relationship between the U.S. and Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini, now living in forced exile in Paris, France, spoke out violently against the Shah and the U.S. administration, issuing a call for a revolution against the Shah and condemnation for supporting the regime. As violence escalated in Iran, the Shah and his family fled, departing the country on 16 January 1979. In the chaotic atmosphere, the Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran and established himself as the leader of the revolution.⁴¹ Due to the revolution, American security interests were threatened, resulting in lost access to Iranian oil and vital locations from which to monitor the Soviet border in the Persian Gulf region. Despite assurance from President Carter that he had no intention of assisting the Shah in a return to power, Iranians had not forgotten Operation AJAX and the actions of the CIA in toppling Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953. Then, on 14 February 1979, revolutionaries in Tehran overran the U.S. embassy and seized seventy embassy employees. Although the hostages were released after two hours, the incident highlighted the grave state of affairs in Iran. Less than two weeks later, on 26 February 1979, the families of embassy personnel and all other non-embassy Americans were directed by the Department of State to evacuate Iran. Nine months later, Iranian students seized the U.S. Embassy again, this time taking American citizens hostage and setting the scene for the ill-fated rescue mission in the Iranian desert.⁴²

The Iranian crisis highlights the absence of a codified joint doctrine and the civil-military challenges the Carter Administration faced. Almost immediately, the crisis caused a deep divide to develop between the National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Brzezinski was a strong proponent for a rescue attempt, believing that inaction showed the weakness of the United States, while Vance struck a more moderate tone, thinking

⁴¹ Ryszard Kapusinski, *Shah of Shahs* (New York, NY: Vintage International, 1982), 106.

⁴² Christopher, "American Hostages in Iran: The Conduct of Crisis," 5.

that negotiations and diplomacy would return the hostages. Secretary Vance also believed that a rescue attempt would place the hostages in greater danger and any military action would have a disastrous effect on the views of the Arab world towards the United States. President Carter initially took a measured outlook on the incident, weighing the options between rescue and diplomacy, and ultimately saw his approval ratings climb both at home and abroad due to his perceived patience. President Carter favored negotiations and resisted Brzezinski's military overtures, however took a prudent line and allowed military preparation and planning to commence. Over the next few months, President Carter's patience was viewed with more contempt by domestic and foreign politicians and citizens as three negotiation attempts failed to secure the hostages release.⁴³

President Carter finally believed that not attempting a rescue would be more costly; militarily, diplomatically, and politically, than by a rescue attempt. He feared he would be viewed as soft on terrorism and diplomatically weak abroad, especially in the Middle East and USSR. Hamilton Jordan, the White House Chief of Staff was subsequently dispatched to Paris for a final meeting with Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, the Iranian foreign minister. The negotiations failed immediately and the U.S. made the determination to sever all diplomatic ties with Iran. Mr. Ghotbzadeh believed that the break in diplomatic relations would be a tragic mistake and drive the Iranians towards the Soviet Union. He believed that any effort to appear soft on hostage negotiations would be suicide for him, both politically and literally, and due to parliamentary elections, no movement on the release of the hostages would be possible until mid-May. Mr. Ghotbzadeh ended the discussions with Chief of Staff Jordan by saying, "I just hope your president doesn't do anything rash".⁴⁴ Mr. Ghotbzadeh wouldn't know it at the time, but the failed negotiation effort was the final event that sealed the decision to launch military action. On 11 April 1980, five months after the Embassy was stormed, when the Iranian's publicly

⁴³ Charles Cogan, "Desert One and its Disorders," *Journal of Military History* 67, 2003, 201-216.

⁴⁴ Mark Bowden, "The Desert One Debacle", *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 2006, 39.

threatened the lives of the hostages, that Carter gave his approval for military action. The mission that initially seemed so unbelievable and absurd was now seen as the only real option.⁴⁵

The actual operation was designed as a complex, joint operation, but in reality was conducted as a series of independent operations. The mission was doomed from the outset, largely due to command and control doctrine. There would be no less than four commanders directly involved with the actual conduct of the operation, two from the U.S. Army, and one each from the Air Force and Marine Corps. A team of U.S. Army Delta Force was to be flown to a site in the Iranian desert by U.S. Air Force special operation transport aircraft, called Desert One. Desert One was intended to become a refueling and staging base for the eventual mission to rescue the American Hostages in Tehran. Once the aircraft and personnel were on ground, six U.S. Navy helicopters were to be flown to Desert One by U.S. Marine Corps pilots, who would refuel the helicopters, pick up the assault force, and fly to Desert Two. Desert Two was a site established by CIA personnel to conceal the helicopters, transport the Delta Force team to Tehran and evacuate the hostages. Once secure, the hostages would be transported by the helicopters to Manzariyeh Airbase outside of Tehran. The Manzariyeh Airbase was scheduled to be seized by an Army Ranger team in advance of the hostage rescue attempt in order to land C-141 aircraft for the flight home.⁴⁶

The mission originated out of the island of Masirah in the Gulf Of Oman with the departure of six C-130s carrying the assault force and fuel to Desert One on 24 April 1980. Shortly thereafter, eight U.S. Navy Sea Stallions took off from the USS Nimitz followed by a telecommunications plane carrying a National Security Agency linguist who monitored Iranian radio traffic for any compromises to the operation. The decision to execute the operation had come a day earlier when the signal was given by a Delta operative and two U.S. Army Soldiers

⁴⁵ Warren Christopher, *American Hostages in Iran-The Conduct of a Crisis*, Council on Foreign Relations (Yale University Press, New Haven, CT 1985), 17

⁴⁶ Rod Lenahan, *Crippled Eagle: A Historical Perspective of U.S. Special Operations 1976-1996* (Charleston, SC: Narwhal Press, 1998), 49.

who were disguised as Irish and German business men who had spent the day conducting reconns of the critical areas in Tehran. The mission began better than intended. Of the eight Sea Stallions that departed the USS Nimitz, only seven were expected to make the trip without mechanical problems, and six actually required. Equipment failure was built into the plan, however, little evidence suggests that any consideration was given to weather conditions. The first C-130 flew directly into a suspended cloud of dust. The dust caused the temperature to rise in the aircraft but otherwise proved to be more of a nuisance than a concern and the C-130s landed at the Desert One site without incident. During the flight however, the air component commander, Colonel James Kyle knew the dust cloud, called a haboob, would cause problems for the helicopters and considered warning the approaching Sea Stallions.⁴⁷ In what was later determined to be a fateful decision, he opted against breaking radio silence to warn the helicopters and no secure communications existed between the naval and fixed wing efforts. Of the original eight helicopters destined for Desert One, only six actually made it, and of the six, five were deemed serviceable enough to continue the mission. Five helicopters for the mission was below the threshold Delta Force Commander, Colonel Charlie Beckwith deemed appropriate for the mission. The sixth and final helicopter to land had a hydraulic leak and was grounded by helicopter commander, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Seiffert. Beckwith and Seiffert were at an impasse. Beckwith, the ground component commander, refused to reduce his raiding force and Seiffert, refused to fly his airframe. After only two and a half hours of actual on ground time, the air component commander, Kyle recommended to the overall commander, Army Major General James Vaught, that the mission be aborted. Upon receiving the abort directive, a helicopter struck a C-130 causing a massive explosion and the deaths of eight service members. The remaining helicopters were abandoned and the wounded personnel and crews were evacuated on the last C-

⁴⁷ Mark Bowden, "The Desert One Debacle", *The Atlantic Monthly*, May 2006, 39.

130. The eight dead as well as the four functional Sea Stallions were abandoned in the Iranian Desert, signaling an end to the disastrous mission to free the hostages.⁴⁸

The Carter Administration acknowledged the failed rescue effort the next day and the hostages were immediately scattered across Iran in order to prevent another rescue attempt. The Carter Administration and the Department of Defense, led by former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral James L. Holloway, launched an investigation into the causes and failures that occurred during the hostage rescue attempt. The investigation concluded that human error in the establishment of the refueling operations, coupled with the difficult conditions in the desert were the primary factors in the accident. The Holloway report further cited deficiencies in the overall planning for the mission, the ill-structured command and control hierarchy and a failure of inter-service interoperability. The Senate Armed Services Committee called Colonel Beckwith to testify and drew several conclusions from his insights. Among them were the lack of standardized training for all special operating forces as well as the need to create a permanent joint command and forward operating bases globally. Based on the findings of the Senate Armed Services Committee as well as the Holloway report, the Joint Special Operations Command was formed in late 1980. The investigations also created the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and the United States Special Operations Command. This legislation guaranteed sustained funding and standardized training and was the catalyst the government needed to reform the Department of Defense and implement the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986.⁴⁹

The rescue attempt was bankrupt from the beginning. There was no organization, joint or otherwise, within the government that had the capabilities to conduct such a complex raid. Until that point, government organizations rarely worked together and the six months the military and

⁴⁸ Cogan, *"Desert One and its Disorders,"* 212.

⁴⁹ Department of Defense. *"Rescue Mission Report. Washington, August 23, 1980. 1 vol.,"* includes Statement of ADM. J. L. Holloway III, USN (Ret) Chairman, Special Operations Review Group.

CIA were given to execute the hostage recovery was entirely too short. There was no planning staff, no contingency plan, no cross service experience and no joint doctrine. The failure of Desert One resulted in the further separation of services and a renewed determination to remain separate. Fortunately, the mindset within the military was changed through forcible means when the Goldwater-Nichols Act was passed in 1986. The lack of a codified joint doctrine for military operations as well as the synchronization absent in civil-military efforts that highlighted the challenges of the failed rescue attempt provided the spark needed to bring the military components towards a greater unity of effort and command. The failure did not however, solve the frictions evident in the civil-military effort. Today, the need to implement legislation for the interagency is equally paramount.

Coalition Provisional Authority during Operation Iraqi Freedom

On 20 January 2003 the Department of Defense was designated the lead agency for reconstruction activities, despite the fact that the Defense Department had neither the personnel nor the expertise necessary to lead civilian reconstruction programs on its own.⁵⁰ L. Paul Bremer took over the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) from retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner, which was established in the belief that the Iraqi's would have some functioning government and the occupation would be short-lived. The transition from the OHRA to the Coalition Provisional Authority was quick and ugly. Additionally, the National Security Council directed other agencies to provide personnel first to ORHA and then to CPA, but rarely pushed the agencies to comply with this policy. Upon arriving in Baghdad, Bremer announced two major steps that would prove to be the most controversial of his term. Most Iraqi officials had abandoned their posts, the Iraqi Army had deserted, and the state was bankrupt. The first was to purge some 30,000 senior Ba'ath party members from state work, and the second was to disband the Iraqi army. Bremer brought with him a number of high-quality staff members, however, frequent turnover and undefined personnel policies led to a high turnover rate and inconsistent advice and performance which led to severe discontinuity among the authority. While intended to be a predominantly civilian organization, the authority remained heavily military as a result. Further, the organization was made up of largely senior supervisors and junior subordinates with varying backgrounds and experience in foreign affairs. Bremer rapidly established the skeleton of an organization intended to serve as a government within a government. At its peak, the authority's staff had approximately 2,000 personnel, of whom

⁵⁰ George W. Bush, National Security Presidential Directive 24, *Post-War Iraq Reconstruction*, White House (Washington D.C.: 20 January 2003).

perhaps half were in the country at any one time.⁵¹ The authority's structure was overly centralized, and Bremer was excessively burdened by the number of subordinates reporting directly to him and the variety of issues requiring his attention. The authority was built from the ground up, and every bureaucratic relationship had to be established from scratch.

The history of military operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom will be the subject of much discussion and disagreement for many years to come. While there is little debate about the swift toppling of the Iraq regime in military terms, post hostility execution provides useful insights into the disconnected nature of the interagency efforts following the rapid advance of coalition forces. The departments of Defense and State lacked effective coordination during both the planning and implementation phases of post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq. Their failure to coordinate again highlights the need for interagency legislation. The lack of unity of effort led to a disconnected planning effort prior to OIF and incoherent command and control arrangements following the fall of Baghdad. The civil-military relations in the Coalition Provisional Authority since the end of major combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom highlight the lack of interagency cooperation that has been the hallmark of governmental friction in wartime and is a useful case study of interagency failure in the current era.

America's military capability came under Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the commander of Coalition Joint Task Force-7.⁵² Bremer and Sanchez maintained cordial relations however the General was under formal orders from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to support Bremer, which he did. This order did not however accord Bremer oversight of, or even necessarily visibility into, military operations at the tactical level. The authority's relationship with Washington was also unclear. The authority was an element of the Defense Department, a

⁵¹ James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones et al., *Occupying Iraq: The History of the Coalition Provisional Authority*, National Security Research Division, RAND Corporation (Santa Monica, CA, 2009), xvi.

⁵² Dr. Donald P. Wright and COL James R. Reese, *On Point II, Transition to the New Campaign: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom May 2003-January 2005*, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, CSI Press (Fort Leavenworth, KS, Combat Studies Institute, 2008), 28.

multi- national organization, and a foreign government all at the same time. Bremer was subordinate to Secretary Rumsfeld but also a presidential envoy. In that capacity, he communicated directly with the President, the White House staff and Rumsfeld. This three-tiered reporting system caused Rumsfeld to complain about the arrangement to Bremer as well as the National Security Advisor, Condoleeza Rice. Rumsfeld felt that Bremer was going around him, however the main issue was that the Defense Department had never established an acceptable procedure to observe, support, and direct the authority's activities and to keep the White House and other governmental agencies informed of activities of the CPA or events in Iraq. Placing both Bremer and Sanchez beneath the Secretary of Defense was intended to reduce the inherent tension between the civil and military efforts of the campaign, but it reality had the opposite effect. Rumsfeld's rarely provided firm guidance and failed to take responsibility for many of the decisions that originated out of Washington, often putting Bremer and Sanchez at odds. Additionally, the pure uniqueness of the arrangement made for challenges. Bremer and his subordinates often complained about Washington's meddling and micromanagement, especially about the use of U.S. money for reconstruction.⁵³

Early reports on CPA operations indicated that Rumsfeld would not allow non-Defense Department personnel working in the authority to communicate with their parent agencies for fear of losing autonomy. Additionally, Rumsfeld did not share Bremer's reports on progress in Iraq with the White House, Department of State or the CIA for the first few months and repeatedly delayed the reports sharing for months later. Rumsfeld was not only to blame for the challenges the authority faced. The administration had delegated interagency coordination in Iraq to Bremer, despite the fact that he nominally worked for Rumsfeld and the Defense Department. This

⁵³ Dobbins, "*Occupying Iraq: The History of the Coalition Provisional Authority*," 4.

arrangement effectively put Rumsfeld in charge of interagency coordination, making attempts to work together even more fragmented.⁵⁴

In their monograph, “Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Force in a Post-Conflict Scenario,” Conrad Crane and Andrew Terrill highlight the difficulty of conducting post-conflict or phase IV operations.⁵⁵ They developed 135 essential tasks broken down into 21 specific mission areas that must be achieved before, during and after major combat operations. Each task and mission is interrelated and each occurs on interdependent time horizons. Key to this is the fact that these tasks and mission areas include most agencies in the U.S. government as well as non-governmental organizations and foreign governments.⁵⁶ With the obfuscated lines of authority resident in the CPA, coupled with the lack of clear objectives, interagency planning was nearly absent following post-conflict action. While the Defense Department and U.S. Central Command had the lead for post conflict operations, numerous other governmental and non-governmental organizations, such as USAID, the National Security Council and Department of State were conducting uncoordinated efforts on their own.⁵⁷

The Defense Department’s establishment of OHRA with Bremer in charge was the first step taken to provide a lead agency for planning post-conflict operations, however, OHRA merely added complexity and confusion in its attempts to consolidate planning efforts. While the State Department was developing their “Freedom of Iraq Project,” the National Security Council created an Executive Steering Group for post-war operations, producing an approved detailed post-war plan for relief and reconstruction.⁵⁸ Additionally, Joint Task Force-4, a subordinate

⁵⁴ Conrad C. Crane and Andrew W. Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*, February 2003, 3-4.

⁵⁵ Crane and Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*, 3-4.

⁵⁶ Crane and Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario*, 5.

⁵⁷ As an example, the Freedom of Iraq Project was an independent effort by the U.S. Department of State to gather a consensus of what post-conflict Iraq would look like.

⁵⁸ James Fallows, “Blind into Baghdad,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 2004, 23.

CENTCOM command developed a 300 page operations order outlining Phase IV operations for military units and the USAID conducted Iraq Working Groups with non-governmental organizations in an effort to develop its own post-war relief efforts in Iraq. Overlaid on all of these efforts was the OHRA, the officially tasked organization for post-conflict operations, who developed their own post-hostility reconstruction and relief plan absent input from the other disparate agencies planning efforts. The end result was a number of detailed, unsynchronized documents, yet no approved U.S. government plan. Anthony Cordesman in his work “Iraq: Too Uncertain to Call”, stated clearly that:

US officials relied on ideology instead of planning...They failed to either make realistic assessments... or properly prepare for the fall of the regime...Parts of these failures were military...Part were not all failures the Administration and US military planners could avoid...The fact remains, however, that the US government failed to draft a serious or effective plan for...The period of conflict termination and the creation of an effective nation building office.⁵⁹

In addition to the disparate planning efforts across the US government, a cultural divide owing to the lack of a unifying training and education base across agencies was present. The varying policy views represents and highlights the inherent challenges in achieving a unity of effort the CPA faced in Iraq. Many of the differences were between the Departments of State and Defense. These differing priorities, while useful during high-level policy discussions, were and impediment to the successful direction and implementation of a coordinated US policy for post-conflict operations. Post conflict resolution took on less importance for the Department of Defense than for the Department of State. For the Defense Department, the priority was to win the war. It wasn't that military planners disregarded stability operations, rather that with limited personnel, efforts were focused first and primarily to the successful prosecution of hostilities. General Peter Pace, the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs during the initial invasion, in testimony before the House Armed Services Committee confirmed DoD efforts by stating, “we

⁵⁹ Anthony Cordesman, “*Iraq: Too Uncertain To Call*,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, 14 November, 2003, 2.

did not want to be planning for a postwar in Iraq before we were sure we were going to win the war.”⁶⁰

Friction in wartime between the military and their civilian counterparts is certainly not unheard, however, in Iraq, organization and structure had to be worked out without clear direction from a higher authority. The complexity involved in conducting post-hostility is instructive in understanding the need to integrate the interagency for future conflict. Operation Iraqi Freedom offers useful insights to the challenges the Department of Defense and CPA faced without clearly defined objectives, synchronized planning and a clear delineation of lines of authority. The Defense and State departments lacked effective coordination during both the planning and implementation phases of post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq and the concept of civil-military relations was lost by its leaders. Their failure to coordinate highlights once again the need for interagency legislation.

⁶⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, “*Army Historian Cites Lack of Postwar Plan*,” Washington Post, December 25, 2004, accessed on 15 February 2012 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24891-2004Dec24.html>.

Recommendations

As the three previous case studies have shown, in military affairs, efficiency and effectiveness are often at odds with one another. This friction is even more apparent within the interagency community. Operations between and within government agencies are no longer unique, however, the response to crisis continues to be administered in an ad hoc manner. America has been fighting the war on terrorism for well over a decade, however, the institutional structure and interagency mechanisms remain largely unchanged from the Cold War. The challenges resident in the national security apparatus of the U.S. Government are best explained by the authors of the Project on National Security Reform. They state:

The U.S. position of world leadership, our country's prosperity and priceless freedoms, and the safety of our people are challenged not only by a profusion of new and unpredictable threats, but by the now undeniable fact that the national security system of the United States is increasingly misaligned with a rapidly changing global security environment.⁶¹

Today, the need for congressionally directed legislation mandating cooperation between agencies is paramount to the successful prosecution of current and future conflict. Due to the current non-existent interagency doctrine, a fractured U.S. government regional structure, and unsound personnel policies of governmental agencies, the U.S. government must organize itself to conduct future campaigns more efficiently and effectively.

⁶¹ Project on National Security Reform, *Forging a New Shield* (Washington D.C., Center for the Study of the President, 2008), i. The PNSR is a non-partisan commission that has conducted a major study over the past three years in order to determine if the national security system is still viable. Manned with an "A-list" team of policy experts, historians, and professionals, the project has produced a preliminary study, a 700 page compilation of case studies, and an extensive 800 page final report. The web page for the project can be found at: <http://www.pnsr.org/>.

Doctrine

In order to protect vital U.S. interests at home and abroad, all elements of national power, not just military, must be coordinated. While the concept of coordinating the efforts of numerous agencies is not novel, the interagency lacks a doctrine for interagency coordination that parallels the military's. Additionally, there is no codified higher authority solely responsible for the development of interagency doctrine, training, or education. To examine this lack of doctrine and organization, a review of governmental efforts is necessary.

In 1947, Congress established the National Security Council (NSC) with the National Security Act "to advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable military services and other agencies of the government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving national security."⁶² What this act didn't do was force the development of doctrine for the military or the interagency. In fact, it wasn't until the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, that Congress mandated the development of joint doctrine for the military services.⁶³ The Goldwater-Nichols Act provides useful insights and highlights the importance and success of the core set of principles and procedures that were developed to ensure military success and offers a foundation upon which to build a doctrine for interagency cooperation. In a briefing from National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies, the "unwritten doctrine" in the interagency was veiled as defend agency interests first, appear responsive to crisis second, and avoid irrevocable decisions last.⁶⁴ While not applicable to all agencies, the NDU's briefing highlights the inherent friction and culture resident in the interagency community. For the U.S. military

⁶² U.S. State Department. Office of the Historian, History of the National Security Council, 1947-1997. Washington D.C., 1997.

⁶³ *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, Public Law 99-433. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 October 1986).

⁶⁴ Interagency Transformation, Education, & After Action Review (ITEA) Program Briefing, *Strategic level interagency planning process: A Work in Progress*, [brief on-line]; available from <http://www.ndu.edu/itea/storage/538/itea.ppt>; Internet; accessed January 2011.

however, a joint culture and joint operations are no longer a novel concept. This wasn't always the case. Although the Joint Chiefs of Staff was made permanent in 1947, strong service cultures, personalities, and joint forcing mechanisms continued to prevent a joint culture from taking hold.⁶⁵ The development that led to changes in the defense establishment began when General David Jones, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, went before the House Armed Services Committee on 3 February 1982, and stated, "The system is broken. I have tried to reform it from inside, but I cannot. Congress is going to have to mandate necessary reforms."⁶⁶ The lack of a unifying doctrine within the interagency is further highlighted in a report by the Center for Strategic & International Studies:

Unlike the military, which has doctrine and a standard approach to planning operations, the U.S. government as a whole lacks established procedures for developing integrated strategies and plans. Each new administration tends to reinvent the wheel, issuing new guidance on how strategy development and planning is to be done, often overlooking the best practices of and lessons learned by its predecessors.... This *ad hoc* approach has thwarted institutional learning and often hindered performance.⁶⁷

Their report further states that there is virtually no idea of planning or a planning culture in the interagency with the exception of the Department of Defense owing to a lack of dedicated staffs and limited political objectives. Participation and residency in a formal military staff college exercise also indicates that integrating interagency, nongovernmental, and host nation personnel into operational planning teams are considerably more challenging than current U.S. military doctrine would recognize.⁶⁸ And without an all-encompassing doctrine for the

⁶⁵ Desai, "Solving the Interagency Puzzle," 57.

⁶⁶ James R. Locher III, *Has It Worked? The Goldwater-Nichols Reorganization Act*, (Naval War College Review, 2001, Autumn), Vol. LIV, No. 4, 99.

⁶⁷ Clark A. Murdock and Michelle A. Flournoy et al., *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era*, Phase I Report (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004), 61.

⁶⁸ Thomas C. Greenwood and Thomas X. Hammes, "War Planning for Wicked Problems-Where Joint Doctrine Fails," *Armed Forces Journal*, Washington D.C., December 2009.

interagency, the disparate agency cultures and values will continue to be considered ahead of the wider government good.

Regional Structure

The regional focus that agencies view the world is equally as important as the concept of operations that define their interaction. The Department of Defense has regional combatant commands under the Unified Command plan while the State Department and Central Intelligence Agency have regional offices.⁶⁹ Regrettably, agencies structure and organize their respective departments in a manner that prevents interagency cooperation due to their own perceived needs. This structuring fails to allow an interagency culture to develop and inhibits a wider cooperation among participants. Current agency worldviews are no different than that of the military following World War Two. In 1946, the newly formed Joint Chiefs of Staff developed a Unified Command Plan. This plan provided a global, regional based structure that established a single military command with supporting participants from each of the services in order to gain a synergistic effect from a military standpoint. Each service also maintains a regionally based component; however, the unifying effort is that on the regional commander. The National Security Council maintains a regional focus based on the Department of State's regional bureaus, but for the rest of the departments, the similarities are non-existent. The State Department/NSC uses six geographic regions, the Department of Defense, with the addition of Africa Command has six, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) four and the Central Intelligence

⁶⁹ For example, the State Department divides the world into six regions: Africa, Europe and Eurasia, Near East, Western Hemisphere, East Asia and Pacific, and South Asia. The Office of the Secretary of Defense divides the world into four regions: Africa, Asia and Pacific, Near East and South Asia, and Western Hemisphere. Within the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence, the world is divided into the following regions: Asia Pacific, Latin America, Africa, Near East and South Asia, and Russia and Europe. The Unified Command Plan divides the world into 5 AoRs that differ from OSD(P) ISA's breakdown. NORTHCOM has the US, Canada and Mexico, SOUTHCOM has Central and South America, CENTCOM has the Middle East and the Newly Independent States of former USSR, EUCOM has Greenland, Europe, Russia and Africa, and PACOM has India, China, the rest of the Pacific, Australia and Antarctica.

Agency (CIA) maintains three.⁷⁰ Within these four departments, none of the regions are aligned, preventing a unity of effort from being achieved and perpetuating inter-departmental friction. While there are sound reasons within all the agencies for their particular regional structure this disparity inhibits effective interagency coordination, policy, and planning. For example, India and Indonesia are both aligned within U.S. Pacific Command's area of responsibility. The State Department, however, places India within its South Asian Affairs regional bureau and Indonesia within its East Asian and Pacific Affairs bureau. Additionally, the CIA places the same two countries in different regional offices. Aligned regional structures would facilitate coordination among departments, achieve unity of purpose and effort, simplify communications, and allocate limited resources where they can best be utilized.

Personnel Policies

Lack of a single unifying regional structure also highlights another problem in the interagency process. People are the foundation upon which an agency exists. The current, near non-existent personnel policies of individual agencies offer some joint exposure, however, this is almost entirely for the benefit of the parent agency and not for the collective good of government. In this vain, a review of the U.S. military's joint manning policies offer a useful guide for fostering and building an interagency personnel foundation. As previously written, the Goldwater-Nichols Act established personnel policies for the Department of Defense that directed the development of officers with joint experience who would form the nucleus of personnel in joint operations and foster a culture of joint cooperation. The act further directed that joint officers receive training in joint doctrine, be given favorable consideration for promotion and complete a joint assignment before being considered for flag officer rank. The personnel policies of the Defense Department have created a joint culture that has prevailed for more than 25 years

⁷⁰ *Areas of Responsibilities of U.S. Government Departments and Agencies*, [brief on-line]; available from http://www.ndu.edu/itea/storage/528/lidy_interagency_boundaries.pdf; Internet; accessed 10 December 2011.

regardless of service and is the foundation upon which joint interagency personnel policies should be developed.

Experience in and knowledge of other agencies is essential for the interagency process to function effectively, yet the personnel policies of most agencies “do not promote professionalism or reward service in interagency jobs.”⁷¹ As a start, adopted interagency policies must not only promote a common culture within the interagency community, but must be seen as a positive promotion path to the senior ranks in government. There is no Joint Staff for the interagency and this monograph does not seek to establish one. Rather, a set of personnel policies, developed by the NSC who would have over-arching authority within the interagency community for personnel, would establish clear guidelines for the exchange and utilization of personnel. The intent would be to enhance unity of effort and foster a common understanding each agency’s capabilities, cultures, and values. They would further facilitate interoperability by allowing individuals to become immersed with the specific capabilities of other agencies. While current personnel policies in some agencies provide for limited interagency exposure, overall they foster the development of individuals with an agency-specific focus. Thus, the sharing of personnel in the interagency community currently happens on the fringes, although usually to the detriment of the person on exchange. This does not and should not be the case. Holding to the ideals that the interagency effort is necessary for betterment of national policy, opportunities exist at all levels of government. Virtually all agencies have some form of legal counsel. Personnel in these offices or from the Department of Justice could easily be exchanged for a short duration without upsetting the vital functions of the parent agency. Likewise, with the vast number of intelligence agencies, the synergies gained and mutually understanding developed between these professionals would be far-reaching with limited impact.

⁷¹ Gabriel Marcella, “*National Security and the Interagency Process: Forward into the 21st Century*”, Organizing for National Security, ed. Douglas T. Stuart (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2000), 186.

National Security Council

Offering a historical discussion and providing the legislative solutions to achieve interagency cooperation are important, however it must be managed and directed by competent authorities vested with the power to make it all work. Frederick Kagan offers the most prescient insights in discussing the structure of the national security system.

“The world has changed, and the threats we face have changed, and the time has come for a fundamental reorganization of our national security apparatus. This is not a problem of personality dysfunction and it is not a product of ideology, although both have played important roles in recent failures. It is a problem of structure, of organization, and more fundamentally, of the conception of what kinds of war we are likely to have to fight and how we will fight them.”⁷²

Personnel policies and a guiding doctrine are more likely to be followed when a single authority is vested with the power to unify agencies. The National Security Act of 1947 established the NSC as the authority to coordinate interagency efforts, however it did not task or require the NSC to develop doctrine or establish personnel policies for efficient interagency interaction. Currently, the U.S. government has a unifying authority, subordinate to the President, but senior to the agencies in the NSC. The NSC, chaired by the National Security Advisor is the existing authority to manage interagency operations and have budgetary influence for the interagency process. Empowering the NSA and staff is the most efficient and effective means to develop doctrine, organize regional structures, and implement personnel policies to meet the challenges of the future. This group would be charged with establishing strategic direction and improving the links between policy, resources, and execution. They would be charged to establish a common set of terms and references that would enable interagency participants the ability to communicate more effectively and focus their agencies’ efforts towards the given missions. Once the framework for communicating is established, the group would develop an operational plan or concept for a given mission. The NSA, much like the Joint Staff, would bring together the key individuals from the disparate agencies to identify the risk and

⁷² Frederick W. Kagan, “Two Decades Late,” *The National Review*, June 2008.

challenges inherent in an operation, prioritize their respective agency efforts towards successful mission accomplishment and help integrate and determine how the agency's capabilities will contribute towards the national objectives.

Conclusion

The history of interagency cooperation in Vietnam, Iran and Iraq has clearly demonstrated that military power alone has not been able to achieve the aims of the U.S. government in foreign affairs. Therefore, synergizing the elements of national power through legislation is necessary to meet the demands of future conflict. “The military Services are but a part of the national machinery of peace or war. An effective national security policy calls for active, intimate and continuous relationships not alone between the military services themselves but also between the military services and many other departments and agencies of Government.”⁷³ The previous comment, written in 1947 by Ferdinand Eberstadt, the chairman of the Army-Navy Munitions Board to his good friend James Forrestal, the Secretary of Navy and later Secretary of Defense, was penned sixty-five years ago, yet its meaning still applies today and highlights the need for legislation aimed at correcting the deficiencies inherent in the current national security apparatus of the U.S. government. The lack of cooperation between and among federal departments and agencies is nothing new as evidenced by Mr. Eberstadt’s comments in 1947. The creation of the National Security Council, directed by Congress in the National Security Act of 1947, was intended to deal with the challenges of the post World War II environment and largely succeeded. Today however, the nature of the threats and challenges facing the United States require a new approach rooted in legislation.⁷⁴ What is needed are an interagency doctrine rooted in lessons from past operations, regional alignment for the whole of government that allows agencies to operate in a common framework and personnel policies that encourage and reward thinking across agency boundaries.

⁷³ Ferdinand Eberstadt, former chairman of the Army-Navy Munitions Board to his friend James Forrestal, then Secretary of Navy and later first Secretary of Defense. Quoted in *Running the World* by David J. Rothkopf, Public Affairs, New York, 2005.

⁷⁴ “The United States...needs a bold, but carefully crafted plan of comprehensive reform to institute a national security system that can manage and overcome the challenges of our time.” *Forging a New Shield*, Project on National Security Reform, November 2008, i.

The U.S. military has won many battles in its history, however, winning the wars have been eluded on a number of occasions. The current interaction of government agencies continues to fail. The interagency process is incapable of meeting these future threats due to the lack of a unifying doctrine, regional alignment, personnel policies, and an overarching structure to provide unity of command. The U.S. military will seldom, if ever, conduct operations without its interagency partners. The challenges inherent in the interagency today are similar to those the military faced prior to the Goldwater Nichols Act and legislation to correct these inefficiencies must be undertaken now.

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